

IN THE CLAIMS

Please cancel Claim 12 without prejudice or disclaimer.

Claim 1 (withdrawn): A microcontroller for industrial control comprising:
a central processing unit (CPU);
a bus interface in communication with the CPU;
a CPU memory module in communication with the bus interface; the CPU memory module configured to include a FIFO memory buffer;
a direct memory access module in communication with the bus interface; and
a serial peripheral interface (SPI) module in communication with the direct memory access module and the bus interface; the SPI module having hardware configured to maintain pointers to addresses within the FIFO memory buffer; the SPI module hardware configured to maintain counters; and the SPI module configured to use the FIFO memory buffer, pointers and counters as a transmission buffer for external communications for creating a virtual special function register.

Claim 2 (withdrawn): The microcontroller of claim 1 the SPI module further comprising a transmitter buffer and a receiver buffer; wherein the transmitter buffer is configured to transmit data from the FIFO memory buffer, and wherein the receiver buffer is configured to transmit data to the FIFO memory buffer.

Claim 3 (withdrawn): The microcontroller of claim 1 the SPI module further configured to operate as one of a master device and a slave device.

Claim 4 (withdrawn): The microcontroller of claim 1 the SPI module further configured to provide a data register chip select signal.

Claim 5 (withdrawn): The microcontroller of claim 1 the SPI module further configured to provide at least one of a CPU transmitter pointer signal, a CPU receiver pointer signal, a SPI transmitter pointer signal and a SPI receiver pointer signal.

Claim 6 (withdrawn): The microcontroller of claim 1 the microcontroller further comprising a DMA module configured to communicate with the SPI module and the bus interface for providing cycle stealing.

Claim 7 (currently amended): A serial peripheral interface (SPI) for use with a microcontroller and configured for increasing the rate of data communications, wherein the SPI module comprises:

- a plurality of hardware pointers to memory locations in a FIFO buffer;
- at least one hardware pointer counter; and
- a hardware logic device; wherein the hardware logic device is configured to communicate with a bus interface and to utilize the FIFO buffer for intermediate storage of data being transmitted from and received to the CPU,

wherein the SPI is further configured to communicate with a DMA module and the bus interface for providing cycle stealing.

Claim 8 (original): The SPI of claim 7 wherein the plurality of hardware pointers are configured to provide at least one of a CPU transmitter pointer signal, a CPU receiver pointer signal, a SPI transmitter pointer signal and a SPI receiver pointer signal.

Claim 9 (original): The SPI of claim 7 the SPI module further comprising a transmitter buffer and a receiver buffer; wherein the transmitter buffer is configured to transmit data from the FIFO buffer, and wherein the receiver buffer is configured to transmit data to the FIFO buffer.

Claim 10 (original): The SPI of claim 7 the SPI module further configured to operate as one of a master device and a slave device.

Claim 11 (original): The SPI of claim 7 the SPI module further configured to provide a data register chip select signal to the bus interface.

Claim 12 (cancelled)

Claim 13 (withdrawn): A method for increasing a microprocessor data communication rate through a serial peripheral interface (SPI) module comprising the steps of:

- a) storing a first value from a Central Processing Unit (CPU) to a virtual special function register (SFR);
 - b) retrieving the first value from the virtual SFR and transmitting the first value through a Serial Peripheral Interface (SPI) module;
 - c) receiving a second signal at the SPI module and storing the second signal in the virtual SFR; and
 - d) communicating the second signal from the virtual SFR to the CPU;
- wherein the virtual SFR comprises memory addresses within a circular FIFO buffer; and wherein the memory addresses within the circular FIFO buffer are identified by hardware pointers in the SPI module.

Claim 14 (withdrawn): The method of claim 13 further comprising the step of using cycle stealing techniques; wherein a DMA module is configured to communicate with the bus interface and SPI module.

Claim 15 (withdrawn): The method of claim 14 wherein the step of storing the first value further comprises the steps of:

- providing a write signal, a virtual SFR address signal, and a data signal from the CPU to the SPI module;
- sending, to a bus interface from the SPI module, a DRCS signal, and a CPU transmitter pointer address signal; and
- writing from the bus interface to a FIFO memory device at an address indicated by the transmitter pointer address signal.

Claim 16 (withdrawn): The method of claim 14 wherein the step of retrieving the first value further comprises the steps of:

- detecting the presence of data to be sent on the FIFO buffer;
- sending a SPI transfer request signal and a SPI transfer pointer signal to a DMA module;

requesting, by the DMA module, bus interface time and providing a DMA address signal and a DMA read signal to the bus interface;

reading a first value from the DMA address in the FIFO memory buffer to the bus interface;

providing the first value from the bus interface to the DMA module, and providing the first value from the DMA module to the SPI module; and

transmitting the data via a transmit shift register and transmit buffer.

Claim 17 (withdrawn): The method of claim 16 wherein the step of retrieving the first value further comprises the steps of:

receiving an acknowledgement from the bus interface at the DMA module indicating that the FIFO memory has been read; and

providing the acknowledgement to the serial peripheral interface module.

Claim 18 (withdrawn): The method of claim 14 wherein the step of receiving and storing the second value further comprises the steps of:

sending the second value received at the SPI module to a DMA module;

sending a SPI receive request signal and a SPI receive pointer signal to a DMA module;

sending a DMA request signal, DMA write signal, DMA address signal and DMA data signal to the Bus interface; and

writing the DMA data signal to the FIFO buffer, and keeping track of the storage location by use of pointers in the serial peripheral interface;

Claim 19 (withdrawn): The method of claim 14 wherein the step of receiving and storing the second value further comprises the steps of:

receiving an acknowledgement at the DMA indicating the second value was written to the FIFO buffer; and

sending the acknowledgement from the DMA module to the SPI module.

Claim 20 (withdrawn): The method of claim 14 wherein the step of communicating the second value further comprises the steps of:

receiving, at a bus interface and SPI module, a read command signal and virtual SFR address signal from the CPU;

sending a data register chip select signal and FIFO pointer address to the bus interface; wherein the FIFO memory address is the address indicated by a pointer stored in the SPI module; and

reading the second value from that memory location to the CPU.